

Representative Henry A. Waxman

**H.R. 3289, FISCAL YEAR 2004 EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL
APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE AND FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION
OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN**

October 17, 2003

Mr. Chairman, the Bush administration has made it impossible for me and others to do what we would otherwise want to do. Under normal circumstances, I would support the President's request for \$87 billion in additional spending for Iraq and Afghanistan, but I cannot do that today. The Bush administration's Iraq policy has been grounded in secrecy, deceit, and politics. Some suspected that a year ago. I refused to believe it. But now, it is inescapable.

The intolerable reality is that they blatantly twisted intelligence information to fit preconceived policies. They lied to promote public relations, from the Jessica Lynch ordeal to the President's campaign landing on the USS Abraham Lincoln and on what the war would cost our country. And through all of it, they have refused to answer questions, provide honest information, and accept any oversight or accountability for their actions. It is an abysmal and, at times, inexcusable record.

I voted for the Iraq resolution last year. I relied on the President's representations about the imminent threat Iraq posed to the United States. And I relied on the statements that other senior administration officials, including the Vice President, made regarding Iraq's nuclear capability. I will not make that same mistake again. They have squandered their credibility and the normal deference we give to any administration, Democratic or Republican.

I say all of this knowing full well we must finish what we started in Iraq. I feel that as strongly as any member of the House. And as one who voted for the resolution, I feel a responsibility to make sure we honor the sacrifice so many have already made by achieving a democratic and safe Iraq. And I feel a special obligation to our troops to make sure they have everything they need to be as safe and effective as possible. But before I agree to the President's request, I want to be confident that those running the war are doing their job and that the reconstruction effort is effective, not wasteful, spending.

Some say the easy political vote is to support the President's request and defend it by saying we are supporting the troops. But if we really want to support the troops, we will first make sure that the people running the war know what they are doing. No American soldier should die because of mistakes up the line.

This administration must put aside its stubbornness and make the world community a serious and active part of this process. Then we could vote for the President's request in good conscience.

Mr. Chairman, the Bush administration has made a series of terrible mistakes in formulating its Iraq policy. But even in the face of those mistakes, the administration insists on going it alone. No help from other countries. No oversight by the Congress. No accountability to the American people. That will never change if we give them an automatic ``yes" vote on today's bill. Instead, voting ``yes" will encourage them to continue the policies that do not work and tactics that deserve condemnation. Our troops deserve better than that. We should oppose the President's request until this administration demonstrates that it puts our troops before politics and honesty before pride.